OIOS

Office of Internal Oversight Services

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2024/008

Audit of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

While implementing its mandate in accordance with its vision and strategy, the Office needed to strengthen planning and performance monitoring and facilitate integration and coordination within the Mission

27 March 2024
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Audit of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). The objective of the audit was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of UNOCA's activities and control processes in supporting consolidation of peace and security in the Central Africa region. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2021 to 30 September 2023 and focused on higher and medium risk areas related to: (a) governance, planning and performance monitoring; (b) mandate implementation activities; and (d) administrative management and support.

UNOCA was guided by the vision and strategy outlined in its annual programme budget to implement its mandate and recently took action to improve some management and operational processes. However, UNOCA had not: (a) issued directives for coordinated work planning and performance monitoring; (b) institutionalized clear functional reporting lines; and (c) established procedures to ensure that extrabudgetary funded projects are conceptualized and implemented in collaboration with United Nations system and subregional partners. UNOCA had also not established an adequate integrated analysis framework to facilitate information sharing within the Mission. UNOCA's relationship with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) was challenged due to the lack of a formal engagement strategy and joint work planning of activities.

OIOS made 11 recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNOCA needed to:

- Establish and implement procedures for integrated section/unit level work planning and performance monitoring to support programme delivery;
- Institutionalize its functional reporting lines by disseminating its standard operating procedures to component heads and staff;
- Formalize the regular convening of senior management group meetings to serve as a substantive interactive forum for information sharing and collaboration;
- Integrate the functions of the Military Adviser and Senior Police Adviser Units into the activities of the substantive components;
- Develop an integrated analysis framework that clearly defines the roles and responsibilites and work methods of all components involved in information analysis;
- Develop, in coordination with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, a strategy to engage with ECCAS;
- Establish, in coordination with ECCAS and the subregion's Resident Coordinator Offices, standard operating procedures for the conceptualization and monitoring and evaluation of extrabudgetary-funded projects;
- Develop a training plan and encourage staff to fully utilize available training opportunities;
- Establish staff-management consultation mechanisms and actively engage staff to develop an action plan to address their concerns;
- Establish procedures to ensure timely issuance of financial authorizations and travel and ticket requests and keep its partners abreast of the Organization's travel policies; and
- Ensure timely disposal of obsolete stock and schedule physical verification to validate the accuracy of its inventory records.

UNOCA accepted the recommendations, implemented three and initiated actions to implement the remaining. Actions required to close outstanding recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

CONTENTS

Audit of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

I.   BACKGROUND

1.   The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

2.   UNOCA was established through an exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council on 11 December 2009 and 30 August 2010, and was inaugurated in Libreville, Gabon in March 2011. UNOCA is a special political mission with a regional mandate for the prevention of conflicts, peaceful resolution of crises and peacebuilding in the Central Africa region, working closely with Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), other regional and subregional organizations and the United Nations system. UNOCA's regional mandate covers the 11 member states of ECCAS, namely: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.

3.   In August 2021, the Security Council approved the extension of the mandate of UNOCA with the following four core objectives, each of which also has sub-objectives:

   a)   Monitor political and security developments in Central Africa and carry out good offices on behalf of the Secretary-General to prevent and resolve conflicts, help sustain peace, and advise the Secretary-General and United Nations entities in the region on sustaining peace issues in Central Africa;
   b)   Enhance subregional capacities for conflict prevention and mediation in countries of the subregion, with due attention to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including human rights and gender dimensions;
   c)   Support and enhance United Nations efforts in the subregion, as well as regional and subregional initiatives on peace and security, including from human rights and gender perspectives; and
   d)   Enhance coherence and coordination in the work of the United Nations in the subregion on peace and security.

4.   UNOCA has also provided secretariat functions to the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee (UNSAC) on Security Questions since May 2011. UNSAC was established by the Secretary-General in May 1992 to serve as a framework of cooperation to better address the threats that jeopardize the stability of the subregion as well as its integration and sustainable development. The Committee meets every six months to review the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa.

5.   UNOCA is headed by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) at the Under-Secretary-General (USG) level. UNOCA had 48 approved posts in 2021 and 2022, made up of 33 international and 15 national positions comprising 1 USG, 2 D-1, 5 P-5, 12 P-4, 6 P-3, 7 Field Service, 4 National Professional Officers and 11 Local Level. The approved posts increased to 50 in 2023, with the addition of 1 local level and 1 United Nations Volunteer positions. UNOCA's annual budgets for 2021, 2022 and 2023 amounted to $7.9 million, $8.5 million and $9.07 million, respectively.

6.   Comments provided by UNOCA are incorporated in italics.

II.   AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7.   The objective of the audit was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of UNOCA's activities and control processes in supporting consolidation of peace and security in the Central Africa region.

8.   This audit was included in the 2023 risk-based workplan due to the criticality of UNOCA's role towards operationalizing the Secretary-General's focus on sustaining peace and preventing conflict and ensuring the consolidation of peace in the Central Africa region.

9.   OIOS conducted this audit from June to December 2023. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2021 to 30 September 2023. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risks areas in UNOCA's operations and focused on: (a) governance, planning and performance monitoring; (b) mandate implementation activities; and (c) administrative management and support.

10.   The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel, (b) review of relevant documentation, (c) review of key processes and systems including Umoja and SharePoint, (d) analytical review of mandate implementing activities such as reports generated by UNOCA's substantive units and key events, and (d) random sample testing of selected substantive and mission support activities.

11.   The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III.   AUDIT RESULTS

A.   Governance, planning and performance monitoring

UNOCA needed to strengthen planning and performance monitoring

12.   UNOCA used the annual programme budget as its main performance management tool to measure and record the implementation of its mandate. A programme officer was in charge of updating the Strategic Management Application tool in Umoja. However, UNOCA did not systematically maintain supporting documentation on the deliverables indicated in the budget. OIOS was informed that the performance results were updated based on discussions with the heads of UNOCA organizational units during senior management group meetings and inputs received via email. Also, as UNOCA had not set up a system to obtain and record such information, there were no documents supporting the achievement of the deliverables reported in the 2021 and 2022 programme budgets.

13.   UNOCA's main components formulated their 2023 workplans. The workplans of the Public Information Unit (PIU), and Political Affairs Section (PAS) were aligned with the UNOCA mandate. The Mission support component's workplan covered service delivery and supply chain, information and communication technology, finance and budget and human resources with the objective to provide efficient and effective support/services to all components to ensure mandate implementation. The military, police and security components also submitted their workplans to the Chief of Staff (COS) for approval. There was, however, no evidence of review and approval by the SRSG of the workplans of any of the UNOCA components, including the workplan for one backstopping post in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) shown in the UNOCA organizational chart (Chart 1).

14.   Further, as UNOCA had not developed section/unit level work planning guidelines and had not issued directives to its components on workplan development and monitoring and reporting, the workplans were in different formats and were not integrated to show linkages between the components to demonstrate how they would work collaboratively towards achievement of UNOCA's mandate. In addition, there were no mission-wide procedures to ensure systematic monitoring of the achievement of the goals in the workplans. At the time of the audit fieldwork in September 2023, none of the components had assessed their performance and documented their progress for 2022 or 2023. As a result, the workplans were not being used to effectively monitor the performance of the Mission's components.

15.   In the absence of an integrated planning system, where long term vision and priorities are linked to resource planning and component workplans are complementary, UNOCA may not be achieving its objectives in an efficient manner. UNOCA may also not be taking the opportunity to efficiently plan and execute cross-cutting or thematic activities requiring multiple capabilities.

> **(1)   UNOCA should establish and implement procedures for: (a) integrated section/unit level work planning to promote coordinated planning of mandated activities by all Mission components; and (b) performance monitoring to ensure timely tracking of workplan implementation with adequate documentation to support programme delivery.**
>
> *UNOCA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that UNOCA is working closely with all components of the Mission to ensure that workplans are integrated and implementation tracked to support programme delivery.*

UNOCA needed to institutionalize its functional reporting lines

16.   Chart 1 shows UNOCA's organizational structure and distribution of staffing resources for delivering its programme of work.

Chart 1: UNOCA's organizational structure and distribution of staffing resources
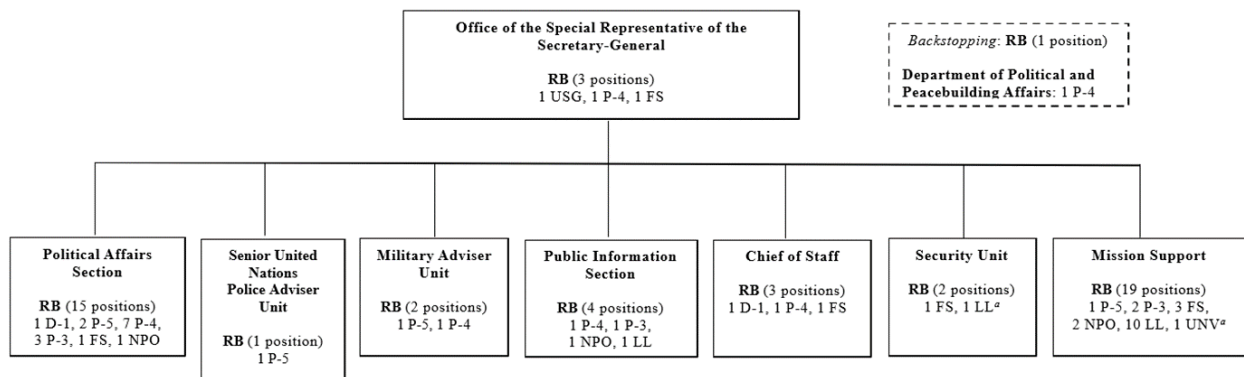
Source: A/77/6 (Sect.3) Add 4

17.   UNOCA's organizational structure in the 2023 and 2024 programme budget submissions was relatively linear and presented all its substantive and support components on the same level, effectively showing a direct reporting relationship by all the UNOCA components to the SRSG. UNOCA does not have a Deputy SRSG position; the COS and Chief PAS posts, at the D-1 level, are next in line to the SRSG.

18.   The COS oversees the core mechanisms and processes that enable the integrated delivery of UNOCA's mandate, including strategic and operational planning, policy and coordination, senior-level decision-making and information management. However, the reporting and communication relationship between the COS and the heads of other organizational units or components was unclear, and the COS was not consistently copied in correspondence with the SRSG or within the components, thereby adversely impacting the ability of the COS to enable integrated delivery of UNOCA's mandate. For instance, it was unclear which reports should be copied to the COS and whether these reports were for the COS' attention or action. It was also unclear which other components should be copied in reports or advice submitted to the SRSG.

19.   UNOCA SRSG approved standard operating procedures (SOP) relating to the functioning of UNOCA in June 2023 to regulate internal and external communication channels, the hierarchical chain and the methods of sharing information within the Mission. However, this had not been disseminated and most personnel interviewed were not aware of it. In addition, UNOCA was yet to establish working methods and templates to operationalize the SOP and optimize integration and coordination in the Mission.

20.   Additionally, the SRSG instituted weekly senior management group meetings, comprising all component heads, to facilitate overall consultation and coordination. Interviewees noted that such meetings were very valuable for information sharing; however, the meetings had not been formalized and they only took place when the SRSG was in the Mission limiting their utility. The 2023 travel records showed that the SRSG had been away from the Mission for about 105 days as of September 2023.

> **(2)   UNOCA should institutionalize its functional reporting lines by disseminating its standard operating procedures to component heads and staff to guide implementation of their workplan activities and effectively achieve the overall mandate.**
>
> *UNOCA accepted recommendation 2 and provided a copy of the memorandum dated 19 February 2024 disseminating the updated SOPs on the functioning of UNOCA and its organigram to all staff.* Based on the action taken by UNOCA, recommendation 2 is closed as implemented.
>
> **(3)   UNOCA should formalize the regular convening of its senior management group meetings to serve as a substantive interactive forum for information sharing and collaboration.**
>
> *UNOCA accepted recommendation 3 and provided evidence that UNOCA had established weekly meetings of: (a) the Senior Leadership Team comprising the SRSG, COS, Director of PAS, and Chief of Mission Support; and (b) the Senior Management Group incorporating Section Chiefs. UNOCA also provided documentation on their meetings.* Based on actions taken by UNOCA, recommendation 3 is closed as implemented.

UNOCA needed to integrate the functions of Military Adviser and Senior Police Adviser Units with the substantive components

21.   The Military Adviser and Senior Police Adviser Units were responsible for monitoring, analyzing and advising the SRSG on security developments in all 11 countries under UNOCA's purview. They also coordinated with the United Nations Office in West Africa and the Sahel on cross border issues such as Lake Chad basin and Gulf of Guinea maritime issues. A review of the work of the Units showed that the senior police and military advisers had not established formal working relations with relevant government and non-government officials in the 11 countries to facilitate exchange of information, monitoring and reporting on security developments, and where applicable consistently supporting their institutions through capacity building. For example, with the exception of Gabon, there was little evidence of interactions between the Advisers and officials from the other Member States.

22.   It was also unclear how the work of the advisers was integrated with the Mission's substantive components, due to the lack of integrated work planning and analysis. There was also inadequate recording of their activities, which led to loss of institutional memory exacerbated by the fact that the posts were occupied by seconded officers on limited contract period of two years, with an option to extend for an additional year.

23.   Further, neither the Senior Police Adviser nor the Military Adviser had functional relationships with the Police Adviser and Military Adviser at Headquarters. Discussions with Headquarters officials to

provide capacity building materials and experts to support, where possible, planned activities would be beneficial.

> **(4)** **UNOCA should take steps to integrate the functions of the Military Adviser and Senior Police Adviser Units into the overall activities of the substantive components to effectively contribute towards the achievement of UNOCA's mandate.**
>
> *UNOCA accepted recommendation 4 and provided evidence that the workplans of the Military and Senior Police Advisers had been integrated into the overall work plans of PAS as well as the Office of the SRSG.* Based on actions taken by UNOCA, recommendation 4 is closed as implemented.

B.   Mandate implementation activities

UNOCA needed to establish a framework for integrated analysis in the Mission

24.   UNOCA's mandate included early warning and analysis of the peace and security situation in the countries of the Central Africa region. Specifically, UNOCA is tasked with conducting regional research and analysis on issues that have an impact on the stability of the Central Africa region. Output 8.1 of the PAS workplan commits to providing timely analysis on potential or emerging threats to peace and security in the Central Africa region with a forward-looking perspective.

25.   PAS organized its resources in accordance with a geographical and thematic focus, with each portfolio assigned either a cluster of countries and/or a theme such as violent extremism, maritime security or climate security. Each portfolio was responsible for monitoring and analyzing events and producing reports in their areas of responsibilities, which are then shared within the Mission and with Headquarters, United Nations country teams (UNCTs), peace operations in the Central Africa region, and where applicable, with relevant external parties such as ECCAS.

26.   To strengthen its capacity on regional data analysis, UNOCA obtained additional resources in its 2021 programme budget for one Senior Political Affairs Officer (P-5) and one Political Affairs Officer (P-3) to ensure delivery of timely and accurate political analysis and early warning to better advise and support the good offices of the SRSG. In July 2022, PAS set up an analysis portfolio with one P-4 and one P-3 responsible for regional trends analysis, multi-country analysis and early warning notes/reports, research on issues relevant to UNOCA's mandate and UNOCA's periodic reporting (weekly situation reports and reports of the Secretary-General). The analysis portfolio produced weekly and monthly reports on UNOCA's activities and relevant political, social, economic and security developments in the subregion, as well as periodic notes on topics such as elections, socio-economic impact of inflation in the Central Africa region and Chad hate speech. In 2023, the analysis portfolio in PAS produced six thematic notes, one early warning note and two special notes upon request. These reports were developed with inputs from UNOCA's substantive components as well as external sources, such as the peace and development advisers (PDAs) in the various Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) or from peacekeeping operations in the region.

27.   However, a review of these reports and related email exchanges indicated that inputs from other substantive components were irregular as UNOCA had not established working methods for integrated analysis to include inputs from desk officers and military, police and security components, who reported separately to the SRSG. The lack of integration resulted in duplications in the weekly and desk reports that were shared separately with the SRSG.

28.   This occurred because while each of UNOCA's geographic and thematic portfolios provided expert advice on matters affecting peace and security directly to the SRSG and produced and disseminated reports

on their areas of expertise, UNOCA was yet to establish procedures for integrated analysis, including multi-country and regional trends analysis. In addition, UNOCA had not reviewed and revised its working methods after 2022, to integrate the additional analysis capacity it had acquired and thereby ensure consistency in its procedures. In addition, at the time of the audit, three posts in PAS, 1-P4 and 2-P3s, were vacant and only one staff was available to carry out the multi-country and regional trends analysis function.

29.   To facilitate integration and coordination, weekly meetings were organized within PAS and between PAS and the other substantive components. However, at the time of the audit fieldwork in September 2023, meetings had not been held for the past three months, with the last PAS meeting having been held in June 2023.

> **(5)   UNOCA should develop an integrated data analysis framework that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities and work methods of all components involved in information analysis to facilitate trend analysis, consistency of approach and information sharing.**
>
> *UNOCA accepted recommendation 5 and noted that the development of an integrated data analysis framework was ongoing.*

UNOCA coordinated with United Nations entities in the Central Africa region

30.   Objective 4 of the UNOCA mandate (S/2021/719) calls on UNOCA to enhance coherence and coordination in the work of the United Nations in the subregion on peace and security. Towards this end, UNOCA engaged with the following:

   (a) United Nations presences in the subregion

31.   UNOCA organized annual meetings of heads of United Nations presences in Central Africa. The last meeting was held in March 2023 in Libreville, Gabon, and was attended by senior United Nations officials in Central Africa and the ECCAS Commissioner. The meeting was preceded by an annual working level meeting of PDAs and political advisers, which brought together working level personnel of peace operations and RCOs to discuss technical issues related to peace and security.

   (b) Peace operations and special political missions in the subregion

32.   In 2022, UNOCA initiated a high-level meeting of United Nations special representatives and special envoys working in the Central Africa region to exchange views and discuss action-oriented recommendations on the political, peace and security dynamics in the subregion. The meeting was held in Luanda, Angola from 29 November to 1 December 2022 and the participants discussed approaches to address persistent and looming challenges in the subregion and made recommendations on: (a) enhanced information sharing, including through thematic focal points; (b) organizing annual meetings of United Nations representatives and special envoys in Central Africa; and (c) development of a framework by technical teams to identify priority areas for complementarity. However, UNOCA was not following up on the implementation of the recommendations. As a result, no framework had been developed to identify areas of complementarity. Subsequently, however, the next high-level meeting of special representatives and special envoys in the subregion on 1 December 2023 assessed the status of implementation of the recommendations. Accordingly, OIOS did not make a recommendation on this issue.

   (c) Resident Coordinators and UNCTs in the subregion

33.   Within its mandate, UNOCA is also required to enhance partnership with Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UNCTs of the Central Africa region to further support cross-border initiatives. UNOCA worked

closely with the RCs, including through the annual meetings of heads of United Nations presences, attendance at multilateral meetings organized by UNOCA, and desk-to-desk meetings between technical and thematic cells such as gender and climate change advisers and PDAs, where available.

34.   Since 2020, UNOCA, through its PAS and together with DPPA, had worked with RCs to develop national strategies for sustaining peace. UNOCA has also been increasingly called upon to contribute to common country analyses (CCAs) led by UNCTs. CCAs precede the development of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and include not only an analysis of the country situation but also cross-border and regional dimensions that impact its development.

(d) RC and UNCT in Gabon

35.   UNOCA worked closely with the RC in Gabon, who is also the representative of the Secretary-General and the Designated Official for safety and security of United Nations personnel in the country. The 2023 to 2027 UNSDCF signed between the UNCT, and the Government of Gabon represents a collective commitment to support Gabon's effort to achieve the sustainable development goals. UNOCA contributes primarily to Pillar 1 of the UNSDCF on good governance. UNOCA also supported the financing of some UNCT projects through extrabudgetary resources and provided continuous technical assistance on human rights and gender issues to the RCO.

36.   Overall, OIOS concluded that UNOCA coordinated its work effectively with that of other United Nations entities in the subregion.

UNOCA needed a clear strategy for engaging ECCAS

37.   Since 2011, the Security Council has reiterated the need for UNOCA to support and strengthen the capacity of ECCAS. ECCAS underwent an internal institutional reform process, which resulted in the creation of the ECCAS Commission in September 2020.

38.   OIOS observed that generally, UNOCA engaged with ECCAS in its mandated programme of work to promote peace and security in the subregion but work on the adoption of some regional strategies and framework had stalled. For instance, in December 2020, the "Declaration on Democratic and Peaceful Elections as a Means of Strengthening Stability and Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Central Africa" (known as the Malabo Declaration) was adopted. In this declaration, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to organizing periodic, democratic and peaceful elections within the constitutional and legal time frame and in compliance with international standards. However, the next steps, which involved the ECCAS Commission, in collaboration with UNOCA, developing the regional legal framework or roadmap and regional protocol based on the Malabo declaration for adoption by ECCAS, were yet to be undertaken.

39.   Further, UNOCA had developed a draft strategy on regional regulation on pastoralism and transhumance in Central Africa, but this was yet to be adopted by ECCAS. The adoption of the regulation would promote support for national and local mechanisms in preventing and peacefully addressing farmer-herder conflicts. PAS, through its climate security portfolio had also headed the development of a draft regional strategy on climate security which has been submitted to the ECCAS Commission, but it was yet to be reviewed and adopted by ECCAS. While progress on advancing the above-mentioned draft legislations had stalled, UNOCA was hopeful for progress on the draft strategy on hate speech, which had been included in the next UNSAC meeting agenda.

40.   Challenges experienced by UNOCA in engaging ECCAS were partly due to the lack of joint planning to define a shared vision, joint priorities and timelines for activities. The absence of formal

planning documentation had delayed the development and finalization of the regional strategies. For example:

a) UNOCA and ECCAS had so far only adopted a joint strategy for a strengthened and sustainable partnership (Stratégie conjointe CEEAC-UNOCA pour un partenariat renforcé et durable 2021-2025), in March 2021 and the ECCAS-UNOCA Cooperation Framework (cadre de coopération CEEAC-UNOCA) dated June 2016. However, ECCAS had neither provided comments nor signed the memorandum of understanding on peace and security drafted by UNOCA and DPPA and shared with ECCAS since 2022.

b) UNOCA had also prepared a draft 2021-2022 UNOCA-ECCAS workplan (coopération CEEAC-UNOCA de travail 2021 et 2022), which remained unsigned. The 2023 workplan was not in place because a joint retreat that would culminate in the adoption of a joint workplan was yet to be held, despite UNOCA's efforts due to scheduling conflicts.

41.   There was also little or no formal relationship or interactions between relevant organizational units in ECCAS and UNOCA. For instance:

a) There was little coordinated interaction between the newly resourced climate security and regional analysis portfolios in UNOCA with their ECCAS counterparts.

b) In addition, there was no formal engagement between the UNOCA Military Adviser and the ECCAS counterpart, the Force Multinationale de l'Afrique Centrale. Neither was there an official relationship between the Police Advisers of both entities.

c) ECCAS shared its analysis reports with UNOCA, but this was done infrequently, even though UNOCA regularly shared its weekly reports with ECCAS.

d) The Secretary-General's report to the Security Council following the strategic review in 2019 noted that UNOCA, in cooperation with regional partners, should focus on conducting regional research and analysis, in particular on transnational issues that have an impact on the stability of Central Africa. However, as there was no formal relationship between the analysis portfolios in ECCAS and UNOCA, there were no procedures for joint regional research and analysis with ECCAS.

42.   Likewise, the planning of extrabudgetary-funded projects was adversely affected by the lack of a joint workplan and by ECCAS and UNOCA having different planning calendars. Therefore, UNOCA needed to work with DPPA to develop a strategy to effectively engage with ECCAS. The aim of the strategy should include the adoption of planning documents between UNOCA and ECCAS that define a shared vision, complementary priorities and timelines to enhance their partnership and coordination towards effectively achieving their mandates on sustaining peace and preventing conflicts in the subregion.

> **(6)   UNOCA should, in coordination with DPPA, develop a strategy to engage with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) including through adopting planning documents that clearly define a shared vision, complementary priorities and timelines with ECCAS for effectively implementing its mandate.**
>
> *UNOCA accepted recommendation 6 and stated that UNOCA and ECCAS were in discussions to convene the next joint UNOCA-ECCAS retreat to review and adopt the draft strategy document and joint workplan for 2024-2025.*

43.   UNOCA's extrabudgetary allotment of $635,130 for 2022 and $889,504 for 2023 were used to finance projects in four areas of intervention. The 2022 and 2023 areas of intervention were:

a)   Reinforcing regional capacities for sustaining peace, with focus on ECCAS (MCAS);
b)   Enhancing local level governance responses to farmer-herder conflicts in Central and West Africa (MCWA);
c)   Supporting UNOCA's inclusive conflict prevention and peacemaking (increased inclusivity and representation of women in peacemaking efforts (MPPM); and
d)   Supporting UNOCA's preventive diplomacy interventions and UN wide sustaining peace (MRCO).

44.   The expenditure on these projects as of 31 December 2022 and 2023 are shown in Table 1. They included costs for consultants, travel, supplies and materials and contractual services.

Table 1: Utilization of 2022 and 2023 extrabudgetary funds

Period	Allotment $	Expenditure $	Consumption rate Percentage
2022	635,130	522,802	82.31%
2023	889,504	716,740	80.58%

45.   OIOS was informed that projects were conceptualized in collaboration with the substantive components, RCOs, peace operations, ECCAS and civil society partners. However, there was little evidence of such collaboration for 2022 and 2023 as the project conceptualization procedures were not formalized at the UNOCA level. During the planning of the 2024 extrabudgetary funded projects, UNOCA sent an email to its partners in the subregion, formally inviting them to submit ideas for extrabudgetary funding under identified intervention areas.

46.   Extrabudgetary project documents showed that project objectives were linked to the UNOCA mandate, workshop participants were from all 11 countries, gender was prominently considered in the project conceptualization, and risk descriptions and mitigating measures were reasonable. However, OIOS noted that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the outcomes of projects could be improved through the establishment of procedures in collaboration with the UNCTs, RCOs and civil society partners on the ground. A review of the 2022 MRCO project documentation showed that while the project documents provided a description of the output/deliverable (results), they were lacking in descriptions for M&E and exit strategy. The MPPM documents highlighted links to the broader ECCAS indicative strategic plan 2021-2025 and the regional action plan but did not also elaborate M&E procedures and indicators of achievement to measure impact of projects undertaken. For instance, there was no indication how the output/deliverable "production of a study/analytical report on women's participation in decision-making mechanisms in ECCAS member states" would be used.

> **(7)   UNOCA should establish standard operating procedures for the conceptualization and monitoring and evaluation of extrabudgetary-funded projects, in coordination with the Economic Community of Central African States and the subregion's Resident Coordinator Offices, with key performance indicators to measure progress towards achieving the desired outcome.**

> *UNOCA accepted recommendation 7 and stated that the draft SOP was under review in coordination with the UNOCA programme officer.*

C. Administrative management and support

<u>UNOCA faced challenges to comply with the established human resources management targets</u>

47.   Section 3 of the 2023 SRSG compact indicated human resources management-related targets including: progress towards recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible for all posts making optimum use of vacancies; and to fill at least 60 per cent of job openings within 120 days from the time of issuance to selection.

48.   UNOCA's geographical representation was skewed towards staff from African countries, as shown in Table 2. Management explained that this was mainly because of the Mission's location and designation as non-family duty station.

Table 2: Geographical representation as of December 2023

Geographical area	Positions subject to geographical representation	Percentage
Africa	14	78
Asia-Pacific	1	5
Western Europe and Others	3	17
Total	**18**	**36**

49.   During the audit period, the following selection decisions were made for these posts, which contributed to the skewed geographical representation:

Table 3: Selection decisions for posts subject to geographical representation

Year	Male	Female	Geographical representation
2023	2	-	Germany, Cameroun
2022	1	3	France, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Zambia
2021	2	2	Chad, Niger, Chad, Ghana

50.   UNOCA predominantly used the recruit from roster (RfR) modality to fill vacancies. UNOCA's average recruitment timeline was 102 days, which was within the SRSG's compact target but more than twice the 45 days average recruitment timeline set for RfR by the Organization. As of September 2023, UNOCA had 10 vacant posts. The vacancies in critical posts, such as D-1 COS since February 2023 and P-4 Gender Affairs Officer since January 2023, limited UNOCA in its ability to implement its mandate effectively.

51.   However, UNOCA's recruitment actions were also influenced by the Organization-wide temporary suspension of hiring against all vacant positions funded from the regular budget and directives from the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and Department of Operational Support on prioritizing recruitment of candidates from downsized or liquidating missions. As a result, OIOS did not make a recommendation on this issue.

UNOCA needed to establish a training plan

52.   UNOCA's mandatory learning completion rates were low. The management dashboard showed that as of December 2023 only 16 per cent of staff had completed all mandatory training courses, 68 per cent were in progress while 16 per cent, some of which were senior management personnel, were yet to enroll in any of the courses. UNOCA's Human Resources Officer was monitoring the completion of mandatory training courses on the management dashboard and via an excel document. However, several UNOCA personnel continued to disregard internal and Headquarters-wide reminders to complete all mandatory training courses despite the requirement to complete them within six months of joining the Organization.

53.   In addition, there was low participation in the training needs assessment initiated by the Office of the Chief of Mission Support with the objective of developing a training plan for UNOCA. UNOCA was allotted training funds in 2022 and the training needs assessment exercise was launched in October 2022. However only one Unit responded. UNOCA managers and their staff could have used the opportunity to systematically promote the career development activities of staff.

54.   One of the areas of weakness identified by UNOCA staff in the 2021 staff engagement survey results was in "learning opportunities and support on career growth for all staff members;" however, staff were not taking advantage of the learning opportunities provided.

> **(8)   UNOCA should finalize its training needs assessment, develop a training plan for the Mission and encourage staff to fully utilize available training opportunities.**
>
> *UNOCA accepted recommendation 8 and stated that all section/unit heads had been sensitized on the need to complete the training needs assessment in consultation with their direct reports and put in place a comprehensive capacity building training plan by May 2024.*

UNOCA needed to strengthen staff-management consultation to promote a positive organizational culture

55.   UNOCA developed an action plan following the 2021 staff engagement survey; however, there was no evidence of staff involvement in the development of the plan. Also, the action plan included actions beyond UNOCA's sole authority, such as: create rapid deployment roster with Department of Operational Support (DOS) and enable more international developmental short-term assignment opportunities for all staff at the United Nations Secretariat; deliver coaching services (70-100 staff); and create talent pipeline for staff from underrepresented geographical regions and gender groups (national officers, women etc.) to equip staff for career advancement. OIOS also noted that the plan was not being monitored for implementation. The action plan was not supported with a follow-up mechanism such as scheduled townhalls, working groups or committees.

56.   There was also an absence of a welfare and recreation committee in UNOCA, in accordance with DOS SOP on welfare and recreation, and a Field Staff Union focal point, in accordance with the Constitution of the United Nations Field Staff Union (June 2017). A rebuttal panel was recently constituted in July 2023 in accordance with ST/AI/2010/5. OIOS was informed that the call for volunteers to take up the functions had not been successful.

> **(9)   UNOCA should establish staff-management consultation mechanisms and actively engage staff to develop an action plan to address their concerns.**
>
> *UNOCA accepted recommendation 9 and stated that there was already a National Staff Association in place, through which national staff engage management on issues of concern. There were also*

> *monthly meetings of the National Staff Association with COS and Chief Misson Support. UNOCA was in the process of establishing a Field Staff Union, which will be the mechanism to address international staff concerns to management.*

<u>UNOCA needed to keep its partners abreast of the Organization's travel policies</u>

57.   UNOCA was responsible for organizing the twice a year meeting of UNSAC's 11 member states on the state of the geopolitical and security situation in the subregion. It also oversaw the programming and disbursement of the UNSAC Trust Fund resources. Each of the 11 member states was expected to voluntarily contribute a minimum of $10,000 per year towards the UNSAC Trust Fund, which is used to finance pre-meeting fieldwork to gather information on topics on the agenda, and to supplement funding for the second UNSAC biannual meeting.

58.   There were several administration/logistics shortcomings in the organization of UNSAC semi-annual meetings and pre-meeting field visits by UNOCA. These included non-compliance with the 21-day advance travel request requirement and outstanding travel allowances for meeting participants. As of December 2023, compliance rate for external travelers was 12.5 per cent. OIOS noted an instance when a travel request was created three days before the event.

59.   As of December 2023, daily subsistence allowance to external workshop participants amounting to $23,067 was outstanding due to their failure to provide accurate bank details, despite UNOCA's repeated requests. OIOS was also informed that Member States often failed to provide the names of participants on time or changed participants at the last minute, making it impossible to comply with the organization's 21-day travel policy. Frequent and last-minute changes to participants' lists also resulted in having to cancel already purchased tickets, resulting in payments of cancelation penalties, sometimes including the entire ticket cost. While UNOCA may not be able to control the actions of participants and Member States, it was important that UNOCA keep Member States abreast of the policies of the Organization and the need to comply with them.

60.   OIOS also noted that UNOCA regularly failed to send timely financial authorizations and travel and ticketing requests to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Regional Service Centre in Entebbe (RSCE) respectively. UNOCA partnered with UNDP to organize events outside Gabon. UNDP's role included payment of allowances to participants and local vendors' invoices. A review of correspondence between UNOCA and their service partners showed that the delays put undue pressure on the service partners and led to additional costs for pre-financing by UNDP or expedited services.

61.   PAS should ensure that participant details are available, prior to submitting forms to mission support for processing and onward submission to RSCE and UNDP. It is therefore important this multifaceted process be streamlined.

> **(10) UNOCA should: (a) establish procedures to ensure timely issuance of financial authorizations and travel and ticket requests to the United Nations Development Programme and the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, respectively; and (b) keep its partners, including Member States, abreast of the Organization's travel policies and the need to comply with them.**
>
> *UNOCA accepted recommendation 10 and stated that UNOCA was in constant communication with UNDP/missions and RSCE to ensure timely issuance of financial authorizations and tickets. In coordination with PAS, Mission Support was sensitizing external partners on the United Nations travel policy and the need to adhere to the rules on the standard of accommodation and 21-day advance ticket purchase policy.*

62.   UNOCA's stock items were mainly made up of information and communication technology items and stored in its main warehouse inside its office building and in two containers kept in the office compound. An inspection of the containers noted that they contained written-off items marked for disposal since March 2023, that had remained in the Mission for more than the stipulated four months. Although UNOCA duly restricted access to its warehouse, it did not maintain records of receipts and issuances of stock from its warehouse.

63.   UNOCA had also not conducted a physical verification exercise to confirm the existence of its assets and to validate the accuracy of its expendable property valued at $142,402 and fixed assets of $173,014. The Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance policy and guidance on physical verification of property requires that physical verification should be conducted at least once a year. OIOS could not obtain physical verification reports from 2021 and 2022, and the 2023 exercise was yet to be undertaken.

64.   This was due to mission support staff vacancies and competing priorities of the existing staff. A logistics assistant was recently recruited in July 2023, but UNOCA had not been able to recruit to fill the posts of supply assistant and property management assistant due to the Secretariat's freeze on recruitment.

> **(11)   UNOCA should take steps to ensure timely disposal of obsolete stock and schedule physical verification to validate the accuracy of its inventory records.**
>
> *UNOCA accepted recommendation 11 and stated that UNOCA had disposed of all its obsolete stock in December 2023. In addition, the Mission will carry out a physical verification exercise in April 2024 and upload the records in UMOJA accordingly.*

IV.   ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

65.   OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNOCA for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	C/ O[3]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[4]
1	UNOCA should establish and implement procedures for: (a) integrated section/unit level work planning to promote coordinated planning of mandated activities by all Mission components; and (b) performance monitoring to ensure timely tracking of workplan implementation with adequate documentation to support programme delivery.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of the development and implementation of UNOCA's integrated strategic planning, section/unit level work planning and performance monitoring procedures.	31 March 2024
2	UNOCA should institutionalize its functional reporting lines by disseminating its standard operating procedures to component heads and staff to guide implementation of their workplan activities and effectively achieve the overall mandate.	Important	C	Action complete	Implemented
3	UNOCA should formalize the regular convening of its senior management group meetings to serve as a substantive interactive forum for information sharing and collaboration.	Important	C	Action complete	Implemented
4	UNOCA should take steps to integrate the functions of the Military Adviser and Senior Police Adviser Units into the overall activities of the substantive components to effectively contribute towards the achievement of UNOCA's mandate.	Important	C	Action complete	Implemented
5	UNOCA should develop an integrated data analysis framework that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities and work methods of all components involved in information analysis to facilitate trend analysis, consistency of approach and information sharing.	Important	O	Receipt of UNOCA's integrated data analysis framework.	30 April 2024

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[1] Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

[2] Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

[3] Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

[4] Date provided by UNOCA in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	C/ O[3]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[4]
6	UNOCA should, in coordination with DPPA, develop a strategy to engage with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) including through adopting planning documents that clearly define a shared vision, complementary priorities and timelines with ECCAS for effectively implementing its mandate.	Important	O	Receipt of the finalized UNOCA-ECCAS strategy and joint 2024-2025 workplan.	30 June 2024
7	UNOCA should establish standard operating procedures for the conceptualization and monitoring and evaluation of extrabudgetary-funded projects, in coordination with the Economic Community of Central African States and the subregion's Resident Coordinator Offices, with key performance indicators to measure progress towards achieving the desired outcome.	Important	O	Receipt of SOP on the conceptualization and monitoring and evaluation of extrabudgetary-funded projects at the Mission level.	30 April 2024
8	UNOCA should finalize its training needs assessment, develop a training plan for the Mission and encourage staff to fully utilize available training opportunities.	Important	O	Receipt of UNOCA's training plan and evidence of its implementation	31 May 2024
9	UNOCA should establish staff-management consultation mechanisms and actively engage staff to develop an action plan to address their concerns.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence on the establishment of the Field Staff Union and monthly meetings of the National Staff Association and Field Staff Union with management.	31 May 2024
10	UNOCA should: (a) establish procedures to ensure timely issuance of financial authorizations and travel and ticket requests to the United Nations Development Programme and the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, respectively; and (b) keep its partners, including Member States, abreast of the Organization's travel policies and the need to comply with them.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that travel authorizations, travel and ticket requests are issued timely and that UNOCA's partners have been notified of the Organization's travel policy.	31 March 2024
11	UNOCA should take steps to ensure timely disposal of obsolete stock and schedule physical verification to validate the accuracy of its inventory records.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that an asset verification exercise has been carried out and UMOJA records have been updated accordingly.	30 April 2024

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

Audit of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNOCA should establish and implement procedures for: (a) integrated section/unit level work planning to promote coordinated planning of mandated activities by all Mission components; and (b) performance monitoring to ensure timely tracking of workplan implementation with adequate documentation to support programme delivery.	Important	Yes	Chief of Staff	March 2024	Ongoing- UNOCA is working closely with all components of the mission to ensure that workplans are integrated, track implementation to support programmed delivery.
2	UNOCA should institutionalize its functional reporting lines by disseminating its standard operating procedures to component heads and staff to guide implementation of their workplan activities and effectively achieve the overall mandate.	Important	Yes	Chief of Staff	Completed	Implemented. UNOCA has disseminated its standard operating procedures to all staff as well organigram showing reporting lines.
3	UNOCA should formalize the regular convening of its senior management group meetings to serve as a substantive interactive forum for information sharing and collaboration.	Important	Yes	Chief of Staff	Completed	UNOCA has established a weekly Senor Leadership Team meeting comprising SRSG, Chief of Staff, Director of Political Affairs and the Chief of Mission Support.

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[1] Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

[2] Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

Management Response

Audit of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						A weekly Senior Management Group meeting is also established with a wider composition of Section Chiefs.
4	UNOCA should take steps to integrate the functions of the Military Adviser and Senior Police Adviser Units into the overall activities of the substantive components to effectively contribute towards the achievement of UNOCA's mandate.	Important	Yes	Chief of Staff	Completed	UNOCA has integrated the workplans of the Military and Police Advisers into the overall workplans of the Political Affairs Unit as well as the Office of the SRSG.
5	UNOCA should develop an integrated data analysis framework that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities and work methods of all components involved in information analysis to facilitate trend analysis, consistency of approach and information sharing.	Important	Yes	Chief Political Affairs Service	April 2024	Ongoing
6	UNOCA should, in coordination with DPPA, develop a strategy to engage with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) including through adopting planning documents that clearly define a shared vision, complementary priorities and timelines with ECCAS for effectively implementing its mandate.	Important	Yes	Chief Political Affairs Service	June 2024	Ongoing UNOCA and ECCAS in discussion to convene the next joint UNOCA-ECCAS retreat to review and adopt draft strategy document and joint work plan for 2024-2025
7	UNOCA should establish standard operating procedures for the conceptualization and monitoring and evaluation of extrabudgetary-funded projects, in coordination with the	Important	Yes	Chief Political Affairs Service	April 2024	Ongoing Draft document under review in coordination with the UNOCA programme officer.

Management Response

Audit of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	Economic Community of Central African States and the subregion's Resident Coordinator Offices, with key performance indicators to measure progress towards achieving the desired outcome.					
8	UNOCA should finalize its training needs assessment, develop a training plan for the Mission and encourage staff to fully utilize available training opportunities.	Important	Yes	Chief Mission Support	May 2024	Ongoing. All Section/Unit Heads have been sensitized on the need to complete the training needs assessment in consultation with their reports and put in place a comprehensive capacity building training plan by May 2024.
9	UNOCA should establish staff-management consultation mechanisms and actively engage staff to develop an action plan to address their concerns.	Important	Yes	Chief Mission Support	May 2024	UNOCA already has in place a National Staff Association which is a mechanism that national staff engage management on issues of concern. There are also monthly meetings of the NSA with Chief of Staff and Chief Misson Support. UNOCA is in the process of establishing a Field Staff Union which will be the mechanism to address international concerns to Management.
10	UNOCA should: (a) establish procedures to ensure timely issuance of financial authorizations and travel and ticket requests to the United Nations Development Programme and the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, respectively; and (b) keep its partners,	Important	Yes	Chief Mission Support	March 2024	Ongoing. UNOCA is in constant communication with UNDP/Missions and RSCE to ensure timely issuance of Financial Authorizations and tickets. In coordination with Political Affairs Section, Mission Support is sensitizing external partners on the

Management Response

Audit of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	including Member States, abreast of the Organization's travel policies and the need to comply with them.					UN Travel policy and the need to adhere to the rules on Standard of accommodation and 21-day ticket purchase policy.
11	UNOCA should take steps to ensure timely disposal of obsolete stock and schedule physical verification to validate the accuracy of its inventory records.	Important	Yes	Chief Mission Support	April 2024	UNOCA disposed of all its obsolete stock in December 2023. Physical verification of UN Owned Equipment for UNOCA will start end April 2024 and records uploaded in UMOJA.